

Warrenton budget meetings wrap up

By **ERICK BENDEL**
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — The city’s budget committee approved spending plans Thursday for the city and the Warrenton Urban Renewal Agency — and explored how both entities can help relocate and reinvent the Warrenton Community Library.

Along with the city’s proposed \$32.3 million budget — up from \$29.3 million this year — the committee proceeded with a plan to raise water rates 7 percent and sewer rates 6 percent. The hikes are meant to stabilize funding for city infrastructure after years of low rates.

The committee transferred \$5,000 from the Warrenton Business Association’s contingency fund to a new line item in the association’s budget: a grant

match for a strategic plan study of the Astoria Regional Airport environs and the North Coast Business Park. Clatsop County and the Port of Astoria will also contribute.

The proposed Urban Renewal Agency budget of \$4.2 million — down from \$4.4 million this year — includes funding for major improvements at the Warrenton Marina (such as the full replacement of the commercial dock) and smaller improvements in the city’s urban core.

The City Commission will vote next month on whether to adopt the pair of budgets for the fiscal year that starts in July.

Library long term

While reviewing the library fund, the committee discussed moving the library from its current operation in the former

Hammond Town Hall building to a more central spot — and possibly using urban renewal dollars to do it.

A recent memo from City Manager Kurt Fritsch detailed the condition of the city-owned building and painted an unpretty picture.

“Besides the structural issues with the facility, we’ve outgrown it,” Fritsch told the budget committee. “There’s just not the room in there for any offices, or even storage.”

Since the new location would draw more families to downtown, urban renewal funds could come into play, he said.

“That would be the way to achieve it,” Mayor Mark Kujala said.

Kujala said a number of people have told him that having a library in downtown Warrenton, closer to City Hall, would com-

plement other city services.

Library Site Manager Nettie-Lee Calog noted that the Hammond site isn’t very accessible for most people in Warrenton.

“We have a lot of foot traffic in Hammond, and a lot of people are very attached to that little building,” she said. “But, if it was downtown, here, you could get kids from the high school and from the grade school, and there are lots of elderly people in the area that could get there easier.”

Calog said someone suggested to her that the old building could become an object of historic preservation.

Fritsch acknowledged that some people in town would rather not see the building demolished. However, “the open-mindedness has been very pleasant to come across,” he said.

‘A community’s soul’

The library is funded largely through a five-year tax levy that expires next fiscal year but will require more funds during a relocation and upgrade.

City Commissioner Henry Balensifer floated the idea of establishing a new taxing district as a more sustainable funding solution than an ongoing series of levies.

If the city wants to go that route, it should make voters aware of the library’s need first, said Paul Mitchell, a member of the budget committee and the Warrenton Business Association.

He suggested that business association-hosted events could donate a portion of the proceeds — from, for example, a beer garden — to the new library, creating a funding source and a way to raise that awareness.

“This is the type of thing that a community can rally around,” he said. “It’s the type of thing that businesses could rally around.”

Fritsch said the city must find a way to grow the library into something greater. For people without a computer or access to the Internet and social media, a library is a lifeline, a place to do research and look for employment.

“We are a reading library, and libraries are becoming so much more than that,” he said. “We could capture so many more people in this community.”

A library, Fritsch said, is an amenity — on par with parks — that expresses a city’s priorities and sense of self: “It is an identifier of a community’s soul and who you are.”

Superdelegates choose between Sanders and Clinton in Oregon

Astoria’s Taylor sides with Sanders

By **ANDREW SELSKY**
Associated Press

SALEM — After Bernie Sanders won Oregon’s Democratic primary this week, two superdelegates announced they’ll back the Vermont senator and one declared support for Hillary Clinton, amid increased discomfort with a system viewed as undemocratic, even among some of the superdelegates themselves.

The issue is particularly critical in this election, because even though Sanders beat Clinton by nearly 10 percentage points in the primary, the former secretary of state could still amass about the same number of the Oregon delegates if a certain share of the 13 superdelegates, a nickname for unpledged delegates, swing her way.

“Every Democrat I have talked to finds the unpledged delegate system offensive,” superdelegate Larry Taylor, chairman of the Clatsop County Democrats, said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press. He became a superdelegate because of his position in the Democratic Party in Oregon, but that doesn’t mean he agrees with the system.

After Tuesday’s primary results came in, Taylor announced he would support Sanders, one of only three superdelegates to do so, with U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley having endorsed Sanders before the primary. Seven have declared they back Clinton. Three remain undeclared.

“I don’t think my vote ... should invalidate the vote of thousands of voters,” said Taylor, who ran unsuccessfully for Astoria mayor in 2014. Each delegate vote on the floor of the Democratic convention in July will represent about 8,500 Democrats who voted in the Oregon primary, he noted. He was speaking to AP from Philadelphia, where he and other party officials from Oregon were visiting the convention facilities.

The breakdown of the Oregon primary gives Sanders 34 pledged delegates and Clinton 25, with two pledged delegates still unallocated amid close returns.

Adding the declared superdelegates gives Sanders a total of 37 and Clinton 32.



Alex Pajunas/The Daily Astorian

Larry Taylor, who leads Clatsop County Democrats and is a superdelegate to the Democratic National Convention, has backed U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders for the Democratic presidential nomination.

If all three undeclared superdelegates go for Clinton, the result would be 37-35, a squeaker for Sanders. That is, if the superdelegates don’t change their minds, which they are all entitled to do.

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Oregon, is unhappy with this system. DeFazio, a superdelegate by virtue of his position as a congressman, is staying out of the fray for now.

“Generally, I do not weigh in on contested primaries, and as long as the race for the Democratic nomination continues, I have no plans to do otherwise,” DeFazio said in a statement.

He was blunt about his feelings about the superdelegate system, implemented by the Democratic National Committee before the 1984 election to prevent candidates with little chance of winning the presidential election from being chosen as the party’s nominee.

“I find the role of superdel-

egates undemocratic and they

should not be a part of the nominating system,” DeFazio said. “Instead, I would prefer to let the voters determine the results of presidential primary.”

But superdelegate Karen Packer, who said she came out for Clinton Tuesday night at her campaign headquarters in Portland, makes no bones about her choice.

“I’ve been a Hillary supporter all along,” Packer told the AP from Philadelphia. “I was an Obama delegate in 2008 and 2012. In my mind it’s Hillary’s turn.”

She said the system adds value and aims to unify the party behind the best candidate.

“We are charged with supporting the candidate that we feel is best prepared and best qualified to win the presidency in November and run the country,” she added. “There’s no question

in my mind that she fills that description far better than her opponent.”

Superdelegate Lupita Maurer came out for Sanders after his win on Tuesday, and was delighted to do so.

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